

SIGHT ADDITIONS TO THE AVIFAUNAL LIST OF ETHIOPIA

By

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During three years of residence in Ethiopia, from September 1962 to July 1965, I have had the opportunity of travelling widely in that country. From bird records kept, I have found nine species, identified without any doubts, that are apparently not previously recorded for Ethiopia. I have had no opportunity to collect birds, but these records may be of interest as additions to the hypothetical list of Ethiopian birds. Locations are numbered on the map. I must point out that the distribution of these records on the map reflect more the time spent in various areas than the choicest birding sites. The concentration of records is in the Main Ethiopian Rift, where I have done the most field work. Comments on previously known range are taken from Praed and Grant (1957-1960).

Anthropoides virgo (Linn.) Demoiselle Crane.

Two flocks seen, one of 12 birds on October 16th 1962, in a grassy marsh just north of Bishoftu (Loc. 1); the other of 17 birds on January 21st 1963, in a grass field on the west side of Lake Zwai (Loc. 2). Previously stated to visit the Sudan "in enormous numbers."

I might also add that Megalornis grus (Linn.), the Common Crane, which was reported by Smith (1957) in Eritrea, has been found in the Rift Valley in open Acacia savanna 20 km. west of Shashamanne (Loc.3), a flock of 5 birds on February 8th 1963.

Trochocercus albonotatus Sharpe. White-tailed Crested Flycatcher.

Two birds seen, one on the edge of secondary forest (in Podocarpus zone), 15 km. south of Shashamanne (Loc. 4) on April 6th 1963; and a second in similar but wetter forest 10 km. southwest of Jimma (Loc.5) on June 14th 1964. White spots in tail were seen clearly. Uganda and western Kenya were previously considered its northern limit.

Sylvia rüppelli Temminck. Rüppell's Warbler.

One male bird seen in Acacia scrub just west of Massawa (Loc. 6) on February 17th 1964. White moustache and black throat were seen clearly. Two other birds in the vicinity may have been females of this species. Previously described as a "locally common palaearctic winter visitor" to the Sudan.

Phylloscopus bonelli (Vieillot). Bonelli's Warbler.

One bird seen in Terminalia-Anogeissus woodland, on the escarpment west of Massawa (Loc. 7) on January 20th 1965. Yellow rump and whitish underparts were unmistakable. Previously recorded as far south as the Sudan.

Psalidoprocne albiceps Sclater. White-headed Rough-wing Swallow.

Four black swallows, two with white heads, were seen on August 14th 1963, on the edge of a Balanites-Acacia forest along the southwest shore of Lake Margherita (Loc. 8). It has previously been recorded as far north as the southern Sudan.

Corvus ruficollis Lesson. Brown-necked Raven.

In a flock of six black corvids seen on the coast at Assab (Loc.9)

on January 8th 1963, two were distinctly larger than the other four, has more distinctly brown heads, and had proportionately heavier bills. Their call was a high-pitched croak, in contrast to the 'caw' of the four smaller birds. Blair (1961) and North (1962) suggest that C. edithae Phillips and C. ruficollis are distinct species. Bird records from Ethiopia have been referred to C. edithae (Smith assumes this for the Eritrean coast). The two larger birds were definitely C. ruficollis.

Nectarinia kilimensis Shelley. Bronze Sunbird.

One male seen on August 16th 1963, in open Combretum savanna 25 km. west of Dilla (Loc. 10). The green head, bronzy chest, and elongated tail feathers were clearly seen. Described previously as common and widespread in Kenya.

Nectarinia erythrocerca Hartlaub. Red-chested Sunbird.

One male seen on Acacia scrub along the east shore of Lake Margherita (Loc. 11) on March 17th 1964. The red band quite across the chest and the elongated tail feathers were distinctive. Previously reported from the southern Sudan southwards.

Uraeginthus cyanocephalus (Richmond). Blue-capped Cordon-Bleu.

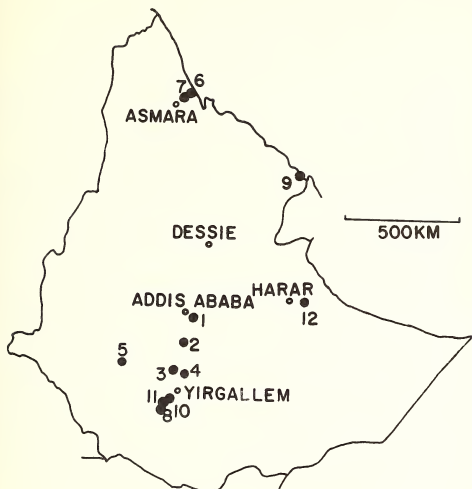
Two males and at least one female were seen in a large mixed flock, (including many U. bengalus (Linn.), the Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu), on April 23rd 1965, in the Fafan Valley, 20 km. south of the Harar-Jijiga road (Loc. 12), in Acacia woodland. The clear all-blue head (of the males) and red bill (of both sexes) were distinctive. Previously reported from Kenya and southern Somalia southwards.

References

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NATURE NOTE

Lake Abiata, Ethiopia, Weavers and Gabar Goshawks.

Lake Abiata is one of a group of lakes at about 5,000 ft. altitude, about 150 miles south of Addis Ababa. They are a continuation Northwards of the Rift Valley chain of lakes; but at this point the Rift has no escarpment and the road descends gradually into flat thorn country with birds mostly familiar to an observer from East Africa.

A river runs into the lake, and along the banks are several colonies of the Black-headed Weaver, Ploceus cucullatus (Müller) one of which I saw being searched by three Gabar Goshawks, Micronisus gabar (Daudin), two grey and a black, intent on robbing the nests. They did not tear the nests to pieces as recorded by Praed and Grant, but each seized hold of the entrance to a nest and thrust its head inside. I have seen a Harrier Hawk do this; but the Gabar has not got such a long neck and is anyway a smaller bird. To get the head well into the nest the shoulders had to go too, while the wings were half closed and hung down like those of a moth. At this point the male Weaver would spring into action, striking the hawk's body with an audible thwack. The head would then be withdrawn. I never saw them pull anything out. A young bird or sitting female would no doubt have been devoured; but the Weavers were not at that stage. The females were still bringing leaves to line the nests, and the hawks would potter about in the bush before beginning their search long enough to give everyone time to get out. Most of them withdrew to a safe distance, and only a few males, perhaps those whose nests were being searched, remained to put up a resistance. The hawks would go away, but returned again and again during the afternoon. The relationship between them puzzled me. One was slightly larger than the others, so I took them to be a female and two males, perhaps a family party. In that case the black one must have been a male, as it was one of the two smaller. (Jackson says the black ones are usually females).

P.M. Allen. 23/7/65.